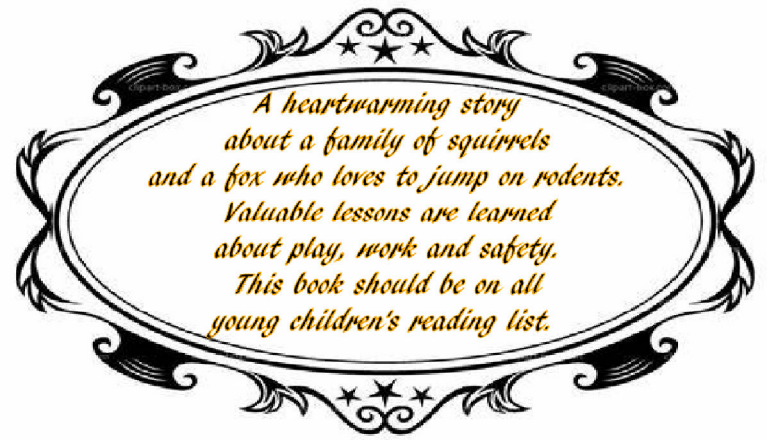
A Squirrel Named Julie and the Fox Ridge Fox


A heartwarming story
about a family of squirrels
and a fox who loves to jump on rodents.
Valuable lessons are learned
about play, work and safety.
This book should be on all
young children's reading list.

This is a work of fiction. However, it is dedicated to our grandchildren Benjamin and Christopher Crowe.

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by Larry W and Lydia E Jones

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Once upon a time in the year twenty twenty a Mama squirrel built a nest in a choke-cherry tree. On the choke-cherry tree there were branches and leaves growing a-plenty. It happened to be on the 4th day of July when the Mama squirrel built the nest. In the middle of the tree, she selected the perfect branch where smaller branches would cradle the nest securely from winds that were sure to blow. The nest was high enough up to be safe from predators.

She started early after the sun rose and did not stop until the nest was completed as the sun went down. An elderly human couple watched from their apartment patio as she would busily chew and knaw twigs and leaves with her sharp teeth and weave them into a beautiful nest.

Then she lined the nest with grass, moss, leaves and pine needles to make it comfortable and cozy for the new-born squirrels soon to come.

Two baby squirrels, Benjamin, who was born first, and Christopher, his younger brother, were happy and playful kids.

One day Benjamin asked his mother why her name was Julie. “The humans named me.” she told them, speaking about the elderly couple known as Grammy and Paw Paw, who lived in the Fox Ridge Apartments ground floor unit with the choke-cherry tree right outside their patio. “I built our choke-cherry tree nest in the month that the humans call July and I heard them say they would name me Julie. How funny!”

Why is our place called Fox Ridge?", asked Benjamin squirrel. His mother Julie replied, "There are red and gray foxes who have their dens on that long, funny-looking high rock formation that humans call a Hogback Ridge.

But we squirrels call it Fox Ridge and all of us have to be on guard and keep a careful watch because foxes like to eat rodents. Some humans call us "tree-rats" since we are, after all, part of the rodent family." "Oh no!" said Christopher squirrel. "I'm just a little kid squirrel and I don't want to be eaten by a fox! But I know Benjamin will look out for me when we're out of the nest playing." "I'm sure he will. Benjamin loves his little brother." his mother Julie said.

“Mama, why did you build our nest in a choke-cherry tree instead of an oak tree?” asked Benjamin. “You sure are full of questions today” replied Julie. “I chose this tree because it grows lots of choke-cherries which we will eat for desert this winter.” “But, I don’t want to choke on a cherry!” Christopher squirrel exclaimed.

“Oh, don’t worry boys.” said Julie. “They only make you choke when the berries are fresh, brightly red and hard and don’t taste good because they’re sour.

But, after the first freeze of Autumn, they turn a darker color and get soft and delicious.

The humans even gather them to make choke-cherry jelly and jam. We will gather some when the weather turns cold and store them for wonderful sweet snacks in the Winter."

"Oh, good, Mama! I can't wait to help you and Benjamin gather a whole bunch of choke-cherries" said Christopher squirrel excitedly.

"OK" said Julie. "You can practice gathering some now, but don't nibble on them. We'll save them and use them for decorations since they are a beautiful shade of red."

One day in September Benjamin squirrel and Christopher squirrel were gathering acorns off the ground under a nearby oak tree.

They were having a fun time filling a bag with the acorns. “Keep on the watch for foxes!” Julie squirrel shouted to them.
“**OK, we will**” replied Benjamin and Christopher. For about an hour the boys gathered acorns and put them in the bag.

Then Benjamin saw a big cluster of acorns high up in the oak tree. So, he scampered up the tree trunk and way out on the limb where the cluster of acorns were. “Ha Ha!” said Benjamin. “I’ll just throw this cluster of acorns down into the acorn bag.”

He hurled the cluster down but it missed the bag and hit Christopher squirrel on the head with a Bonk! “Ouch!” said Christopher. “You big rat! I’ll show you how to hit somebody with acorns!” Christopher squirrel scampered up the tree to get to Benjamin. Both of the boys ran, jumped and scampered from limb to limb chasing each other. Christopher landed on a small dead, rotten limb. The limb broke off just as Benjamin grabbed Christopher’s arm and saved him from falling.

But the rotten limb landed on the bag of acorns and it burst open, scattering the acorns all over the ground again.

"Oh", Christopher cried out to Benjamin. “Our Mama Julie will be furious. We should have worked hard gathering acorns instead of playing so rough and forgetting what we promised, to fill the bag with acorns.”

Now, foxes are sneaky, smart varmints. They know how to catch rodents. After all, who can out-fox a fox? In the Hogback Ridge one fox had out-foxed so many rodents by jumping up and coming down on them when they weren't looking or when they couldn't even run because of fear of him. He could jump so high that all the other foxes called him the champion "Jumping Fox of Hogback Ridge". So, he figured that he could easily out-fox the family of squirrels living over in the Fox Ridge Apartments choke-cherry tree. So, over to Fox Ridge Apartments he went, bounding and jumping all the way.

Mama Julie squirrel looked out from her nest in the choke-cherry tree and thought she saw a flash of red color near the oak tree where Benjamin and Christopher were supposed to be gathering acorns.

"**Oh, No! It's a Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge** and he's sneaking up on the boys! Run Benjamin! Run Christopher! Run home now! A Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge is coming after you!" The two boys chattered in horror and scampered as fast as their legs could carry them. They ran over and climbed the choke-cherry tree and tumbled into the nest, out of breath, with the hungry Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge right on their squirrel tails.

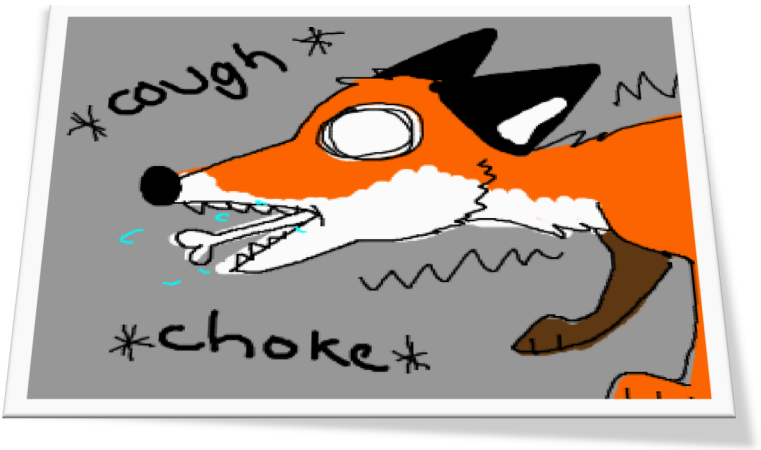
Mama Julie squirrel started to scold her boys, telling Benjamin "I thought you were going to keep a good lookout for foxes. Instead, both of you were too busy playing, then arguing and chasing each other. Look! The acorn bag is still empty. And besides, you almost got eaten by that Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge! But I'm just glad you are safe in our nest now. Both of you are more precious to me than a bag of acorns."

Oh, but the danger wasn't over! The Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge wasn't about to give up so easily. After all, he was the champion jumper. Feeling safe in the squirrel nest, Mama Julie assured Benjamin and Christopher that the fox couldn't get to them and would soon go back to Hogback Ridge. But all of a sudden, a fox's face appeared just a foot away from the top rim of the squirrel nest, with long teeth showing, then disappeared.

Again the fox's face appeared and, before disappearing, said "I'm the champion jumping fox from Hogback Ridge and I can jump right into your Fox Ridge nest! **I'll have squirrel and dumplings for supper**!" Julie grabbed her boys and exclaimed, "What can we do?"

Benjamin and Christopher remembered the sour choke cherries they had gathered for decorations.

"**Let's make the fox choke on them**" said Benjamin. So, when the jumping fox next appeared at the rim of the nest, they all threw the sour choke cherries into the fox's mouth. As he disappeared down again, they heard him coughing and hacking and choking on the berries. "That will take care of him!" said Christopher.



But that still did not persuade the fox to quit trying to get to the squirrels. As he continued to appear at the rim of the nest, Benjamin peeked over as the fox went down and saw something peculiar. The fox was using a small trampoline at the base of the tree to jump so high.

"I have a plan" said Benjamin to Christopher. "We'll sneak down the back side of our choke-cherry tree and turn that trampoline over. Then he won't be able to jump so high." So, the two boys carefully went down the back side of the tree to the ground. The next time the fox jumped up, they scampered to the trampoline and flipped it upside down.

When the jumping fox came back down, he fell flat on the ground with a big, loud splat!
And by that time the fox was exhausted from all the jumping.

The fox was so sore from falling flat on the ground that he tucked his red tail between his legs and ran away from the Fox Ridge Apartments choke-cherry tree back to his Hogback Ridge den. “Look!” Shouted Benjamin. “We out-foxed the Fox Ridge fox from Hogback Ridge!” “We sure did!” replied Christopher.

He vowed never, never, never to try and out-fox those squirrels again.

The next day, after all the excitement had died down, Julie squirrel reminded the two boys that there was unfinished work to do. “Yes, we know” said Benjamin. “Christopher and I need to finish gathering acorns and fill the bags so we will have food for this Winter.

This time we’ll work just as hard as we play and we won’t argue and squabble any more.” “Very good” replied their mother Julie. “We have all learned some lessons about playing, being hard workers and being safe.” The Mama squirrel named Julie and her two boys, Benjamin and Christopher, lived in peace in their Fox Ridge choke-cherry tree and the jumping fox from Hogback Ridge never bothered them again.

About the author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter. All are available on lulu.com

As a wrangler on the "Great American Horse Drive", at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, "The Oldest Greenhorn", chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the "Gate-to-Gate" trophy belt buckle the hard way. Available on lulu.com

This book, "A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox" is his first, but hopefully not the last, children's book. Available on lulu.com